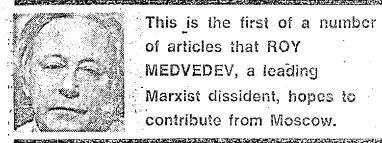
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Taissians who want America to



This is the first of a number of articles that ROY MEDVEDEV, a leading Marxist dissident, hopes to contribute from Moscow.

MANY ARTICLES are now appearing in the Soviet Press about the opponents of SALT If in the American Senate, and their attempts to stop ratification. But hardly anyone asks if the treaty has opponents in Russia. Assuming American radification, Moscow's ratification will, of course, be a formality. Less obvious is the fact that there were strenuous behind-thescenes arguments before the treaty was put forward for signature.

Under the American system of government, the decisive debate continues after the President's signing of a treaty. In Russia the argument all happens before the signing (though what is said may sel-

dom come to light).

The enemies of detente have certainly made their presence felt inside the Soviet Party leadership, Differences over Brezhnev's policy were a reason for the removal from the Politburo of Shelest in 1972 and Shelepin in 1975. Critics of SALT II in the present Politburo appear to have included chief ideoiogist Suslov and Moscow Party boss Grishin, It also scems that MinisterApproved for Release 2005/01/12
Defence Ustinov and the
KGB chief Andropov coincided with talks between chief Andropov KGB

aged to spin out the talks under different pretexts.

And he is too old a hand
not to have realised that his recent declaration that Soviet Union will not countenance any amendments by the Senate was bound to pre-judice the chances of ratification.

naturally One wouldn't a hitch in ratification favour a particular Moscow power group, especially at a moment of possible leadership change? Some attentive observers have already sensed a link between certain events and attempts to complicate the SALT negotiations, Thus 1977 saw provocatively timed arrests of well-known dissidents on the eve of the arrival in Moscow. of Secretary of State Vance

(whose SALT mission was doomed in advance because of President Carter's human rights scatements).

And in 1978, several times

Vance and Gromyko in Gen-The wiste obligad I

were able to drag out the pre- dent Carter to take a number liminary negotiations on of economic and political SALT by submitting endless actions with the result that details for expert approval. many people thought that It is unclear whether SALT II was put at risk. What actually happened was that their chorts. But he, too, man- American foreign policy responses to internal Soviet events allowed the Soviet Union negotiators to take a harder line at the SALT talks.

In the event it was the Americans who showed greater impatience to con-clude an agreement. Only later did the Soviet leadership make a series of liberal ges-(the exchange tures political prisoners, the easing of Jewish emigration) that were obviously calculated to create a more favourable atmosphere in the American Congress.

All the same, the treaty as signed in Vienna is a compromise between its supporters and its opponents in the Soviet ruling élite, and a check to its ratification could be a defeat for the principal supporters of Brezhnev's policies, as well as a political and strategic setback for the US Administration.

Modern weapons are becoming an increasing brake

tary-industrial enterprises assisted in the production of ordinary consumer goods, the picture has now changed.

In 1960-67 it was quite normal, given the difficulty of fulfilling economic plans to order many kinds of peaceful equipment? (tracfor parts, for example) from military factories. Army construction battalions even built ordinary civilian apartment blocks in Moscow and other cities. Now the reverse is more common: enterprises producing for the civil economy often receive military orders for special components and spares.

Lack of finance or technology has caused the production of consumer goods to fail behind plan (not to mention demand) for five or six years now. The economy is suffering from lack of skilled labour, the rate of increase in consumer goods output has sharply declined, and agricultural production is it, a state of stagnation that makes it impossible to keep pace with the urban population increase. As a result, those responsible for these branches of the economy, as well as the party leaders at the party leaders at as 10-15 years ago many mili-

(who have no concern for a strong interest in reducing military spending.

Stalinist terror

But the armed forces and military industry can advance powerful arguments through their representatives in the Polithero. One must not forget that in 1941-45 a large part of the Soviet Union endured enemy occupation from which it was freed only at the price of huge human and material losses. The military decided that only strategic superiority could guarantee future security.

Another ground for the political influence of the military is the huge losses they suffered in the Stalinist terror of 1937-38. Nearly nine out of every 10 generals were arrested and shot in that period—men famous since the Revolution. Nearly every military district chief, nearly every official in the army notitical directorate, numerous admirals, six deputy commissars of defence, the head of every military academy and many chiefs of military planning statts were disposed of. Suffice it to say that of 199 divisional commanders on active duty in 1936, 136 were ! arrested and shot in 1937-38

No army in a single war could lose so many senior commanders.

After the war Stalin systematically retired all those commanders who had been promoted and be came famous, beginning with the most famous of all, Zhukov. When Stalin died it was these men who became mainly responsible for the liquidation of the Beria group and for strengthening the power of Khrashchev. In 1957 it was Zhukov as Minister of Defence who assured Khrushchev of victory over the politically more influential group of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich and Bulganin.

Similarly, in 1964 it was the army which heiped the party group that organised Khrushchev's removal after he har lost its suport. (The removal was prepared by Suslov, who was supported by the party apparatus, and by Shelepia using the KGB. But it was Brezhnev who emerged as leader, with military support.)

These actions by the military to create the sort of party leadership and security service they wanted were a direct reaction to the repression of 1937-38 and the mass dismissals of 1949-52. They and the military - industrial complex determined never again to be in a position of total dependence on the party dictatorship and to acquire real influence in national decision-making.

However, in the post-war period the Soviet Union was technologically and economically weak. The West had absolute strategic and economic superiority and could conduct policy from a position of strength, a fact driven home by Russia's humiliation in the Cuban missile crisis. After Cuba the military apparatus received a much breader base for its development and priority in the use of national resources.

The object of this was the achievement of strategic superiority, particularly in view of the growing threat from China. In 1977-79 Soviet tactical and strategic forces for practical purposes drew level with those of the West and in some cases overtook them. The SALT II agreement signifies the slowing down of this tendency and the abandomment of the earlier goal of saperiority (1 to catch up and overtake?) in fayour of that of parity?

The difficulties which arose during the long drawn-out negotiations over SALT were due to this change of aim. Brezhnev and his circle had to convince the military of the necessity of compromise, which the economic interest of the country in general nemanded.

In contrast to the situation in the American Senate no group in the Soviet Union could now stop SALT II ratification; nor is there 'any likelihood that the Soviet Union would violate the treaty once it enters iato force. But there are influential groups in the USSR who would not mind at all if the US Senate refused to ratify the treaty, since that would represent a fusco for Brezhnev's policies.

In the present circumstances in the Soviet Union—the natural coming to an end of the power of Brezinev's group—the fellare of SALT II could mean only one thing—the likelihood of a new leadership that will lose notime in securing a more obvious military superiority. In which case any subsequent treaty would be certain to be less favourable to America than the present one.

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